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ABSTRACT

Educational vouchers were proposed several times during the early seventies, but received only one limited trial. Because of recent changes, the political climate for vouchers should be more favorable in the next few years. Public schools are facing both increased demands and decreased political support as a result of several trends: the population is aging; minority groups are disproportionately represented among the young; education costs have risen; and federal and state governments have limited local decision-making. Supporters of vouchers believe a regulated market of schools would meet social goals of education, but with less government control than currently. For this system to succeed, there must be wide participation and a variety of competing alternatives. Evidence suggests, however, that social class differences or parents' perceptions of their lack of expertise may limit participation. Competition would be restricted by judicial rulings and the economic and political resources of school constituencies. Further, the government would retain the authority to administer required features of educational programs and to enact regulations that affect market activity. The result may be a relatively free market with many options for some, but for others a public school system remaining virtually unchanged. (Author/JM)

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THE FALL AND RISE OF EDUCATION VOUCHERS

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Introductory Statement

The Center for Social Organization of Schools has two primary objectives: to develop a scientific knowledge of how schools affect their students, and to use this knowledge to develop better school practices and organization.

The Center works through five programs to achieve its objectives. The Studies in School Desegregation program applies the basic theories of social organization of schools to study the internal conditions of desegregated schools, the feasibility of alternative desegregation policies, and the interrelations of school desegregation with other equity issues such as housing and job desegregation. The School Organization program is currently concerned with authority-control structures, task structures, reward systems, and peer group processes in schools. It has produced a large-scale study of the effects of open schools, has developed Student Team Learning instructional processes for teaching various subjects in elementary and secondary schools, and has produced a computerized system for school-wide attendance monitoring. The School Process and Career Development program is studying transitions from high school to post secondary institutions and the role of schooling in the development of career plans and the actualization of labor market outcomes. The Studies in Delinquency and School Environments program is examining the interaction of school environments, school experiences, and individual characteristics in relation to in-school and later-life delinquency.

The Center also supports a Fellowships in Education Research program that provides opportunities for talented young researchers to conduct and publish significant research, and to encourage the participation of women and minorities in research on education.

This report, prepared by the Fellowships in Educational Research program, examines the agreements and disagreements surrounding education vouchers and their effects on public education.

ABSTRACT

Educational vouchers for school financing were seriously proposed several times during the early seventies, but received only one limited trial. Because of recent changes in population and school governance, the political climate for vouchers should be more favorable during the next few years. Public schools are facing both increased demands and decreased political support as a result of several trends: the population is aging; minority groups are disproportionately represented among the young; education costs have risen; and federal and state governments have limited local decision-making.

Supporters of vouchers believe that a regulated market of schools would meet social goals of education, but with less government control than the current public school system. For such a market to operate successfully, there must be wide participation and a variety of competing alternatives. Evidence suggests, however, that participation would be affected by the existing roles of parents and professionals and by behavior differences associated with social class. Competition would be restricted by judicial rulings and by the economic and political resources of school constituencies. Further, the government retains the authority to administer required features of educational programs (such as information, school certification, and student selection) and to enact regulations that stimulate or restrict market activity. This means that the government retains considerable control over the characteristics of the educational market confronting families. The result may be that for some, there is a relatively free market with many options, while for others, the public school system remains virtually unchanged.

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INTRODUCTION

Attempts to implement education vouchers failed again and again during the seventies, but supporters are renewing their efforts and prospects for vouchers are improving. Recent changes in the age and race composition of the population, and in education governance, indicate that the public will be more receptive to vouchers during the eighties. Vouchers fit well into the Reagan agenda for re-defining the role of government, and will soon be the subject of a California referendum campaign.

Education vouchers are tuition certificates that are issued by the government and redeemable at the school of the student's choice. Their aim is to make the education system operate as much like a free market as possible. Voucher supporters would like to shift major authority over education from the state to individual families and students. They believe that market competition would improve the quality of education, and that schools should be as free as possible from government regulation. Others, however, question whether vouchers--or any public financing of nonpublic schools--are the best way to achieve the goal of increasing the influence of families and schools. They question whether it is desirable or possible, within the constraints of U.S. society, to establish a truly competitive market in education. The best way to improve education, they believe, is to improve the public school system.

The first section of this paper discusses some recent demographic and school governance changes that should contribute to improving the political climate for vouchers. The following sections present points of agreement and disagreement between voucher supporters and opponents, and the recent history of vouchers in the U.S. The final section analyzes the possible

effects of a marketplace on education in the context of other social characteristics.

CHANGING PROSPECTS

Changes in Population and Governance

During the seventies, the number and proportion of young people have declined, the minority group percentage among the young has increased, federal and state government actions have limited the policy options of local school governing boards, and education costs have risen.

Figure 1 shows that the population is aging. In 1970, there were 1.9 adults for each person under 18. By 1978, the number of adults for each young person had risen to 2.4. In 1979, this ratio was 2.6 for whites, 1.7 for blacks, and 1.4 for Hispanics (U.S. Census 1980c: Table 28).

Figure 1 About Here

According to the projections believed most accurate by the U.S. Census, there will be 2.6 adults per child in 1990. Some analysts (Kirst and Garms, 1980) predict that the figure will be 3.3 (U.S. Census, 1978a: Table A-1 and 1977: Table 6).[1] Thus, minority groups are disproportionately represented among the young, and the margin by which adults outnumber young people is increasing.

A social change closely related to the declining percentage of young people is that a smaller percentage of adults are living with children. The percentage of households containing at least one member under 18 decreased from 47% to 41% between 1971 and 1979 (U.S. Census 1972: Tables 1, 17 and 1980a: Tables 1, 20). Although the presence of children in a household is not a direct measure of support for education or likelihood of political participation in education decision-making (since it assumes that

only adults who live with children support education), it does measure daily contact with children, and quite likely is closely related to these opinions and behaviors.

In addition, in 1979, 40% of white households included at least one child; however, 52% of black households and 61% of Hispanic households included a child (U.S. Census 1980a: Tables 1, 20). According to the U.S. Census (1979d: Table 2), 1978 adult voting rates were 47% for whites, 37% for blacks, and 20% for Hispanics. This suggests that the percentage of adults living with children is even lower among voters than in the general population.

Figure 1 also illustrates that the number of young people has declined, and the percentage of black young people has increased since 1970. Both of these changes are reflected in school enrollments. Total enrollment in grades 1-12 (public and nonpublic) declined 11.7% between 1970 and 1979 (with almost all the decline during the past five years in grades 1-8). During this period, black enrollment declined only 2.4%; Hispanic enrollment increased 5.2% between 1972 (the earliest year in which the Census Bureau collected these data) and 1979 (U.S. Census, 1980b: Table 1). Although the National Center for Education Statistics (forthcoming) predicts that elementary enrollment will begin to rise during the eighties, total enrollment will continue to fall.

In the area of school governance, state and federal governments took many actions during the seventies that decreased the prerogatives of local school districts (see Wise, 1979). At the federal level, most of the actions were responses to interest groups seeking increased resources. Such actions include Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, banning discrimination on the basis of sex; the Lau v. Nichols Supreme Court ruling

(1974), requiring schools to address the needs of non-English-speaking students; and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975). At the state level, many states have mandated budgeting procedures, student assessment, program evaluation, and detailed competency-based graduation requirements, and have given teachers collective bargaining rights. In addition, several are under court orders to make their financing more equitable, by equalizing either per pupil spending or taxes raised by equal tax rates. Finally, options of local boards continue to be affected by the actions of extra-governmental organizations such as textbook and test publishers.

While these changes have been going on, education costs have risen. Current expenditures for elementary and secondary education increased 30% between the school years ending in 1970 and 1979, adjusting for inflation but not for the 8.5% enrollment decline (Grant and Eiden, 1980: Tables 66, 68; U.S. Census, 1980b: Table 1).

How these changes in population and governance will affect support for vouchers or any aid to nonpublic e[illegible]ation is, of course, difficult to predict. One question is how they will affect the amount of money available for elementary and secondary schools; a second is how they will affect the allocation of the funds. Kirst and Garms (1980) believe that competition from programs serving the growing adult population will reduce the share of the social services funds approved for elementary and secondary education. That share could even be disproportionately reduced because of disinterest in programs for children or disapproval of federal and state policy mandates among those who are politically active.

The second unknown is how funds for education will be allocated. If decisions do not involve funding levels, parents are probably more

likely than non-parents to participate in education policy-making and thus to determine the allocation of its funding. If voting behavior continues to vary according to race and inversely with income, these voting parents will be disproportionately white and middle class. In recent years, many of their children have been attending schools with increasing minority enrollments because of either forced desegregation or changing neighborhoods, a situation which has caused many problems. Furthermore, their children will probably be receiving reduced resources because legally mandated special programs will have to be retained, even if spending power is cut. These middle-class parents traditionally have supported public education, but if they feel powerless to influence the schools, more of them may support policies that transfer government funds to nonpublic schools (Doyle, 1980b).

The Nonpublic School Sector

One way to assess support for public education is to compare enrollments of public and nonpublic schools. Doyle (1979, 1980a, 1980b) interprets recent changes in nonpublic enrollments as evidence that public education has already begun to weaken. Table 1 indicates, however, that, at least from the viewpoint of total enrollment since 1900, the public sector is not atypically

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Table 1 about here

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weak now. First, columns 1 and 5 show that in spring 1980, the percentage of students enrolled in nonpublic schools was well within the normal range for the period. Second, columns 2, 3, 6, and 7 indicate that with only two exceptions, the nonpublic sector has always "done better" (increased more or decreased less) than the public sector. The two exceptions are the

early 1900's, when schooling for 14-17 year olds was becoming standard (column 4), and the sixties and early seventies, when about a fourth of the Catholic schools closed (NCEA, 1980: Table 5).

What is salient today is the levelling off of the steep nonpublic enrollment declines of the early seventies, shown at the bottoms of columns 2 and 6. The difference between elementary enrollment declines during the early seventies and those during the late seventies is dramatic, and may be a sign of current dissatisfaction with public schools.

Other points cited as evidence of the current strength of nonpublic schools by Doyle (1979, 1980a) are growing enrollment in non-Catholic nonpublic schools and an increasing percentage of both upper-middle-class and black families leaving the public system. Figure 2 illustrates the first phenomenon. Between 1965 and 1976, the number of Catholic schools decreased

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Figure 2 about here

26% and the number of non-Catholic nonpublic schools increased 56% (NCEA, 1980: Table 5). Arguments that interpret this as a sign of general strength in the nonpublic sector, however, seem to assume that the Catholic school declines reflect only a decrease in school availability. The extent to which they reflect decreased desire to attend should also be considered, especially when assessing potential support for vouchers.

Table 2 shows that, although nonpublic attendance rates increased for whites and blacks in most income groups between 1970 and 1978, these

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Table 2 about here

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increases were generally larger for students in grades 1-8 in the three

highest income groups. (The pattern is not apparent in grades 9-12; about three fourths of the students are in grades 1-8, however, and trends are probably more likely to begin in those grades.) Although claims that the public schools are in imminent danger of collapse may be somewhat exaggerated, this is evidence that public schools have already begun to lose support of parents in the most politically active groups.

The enrollment figures in Table 3 show that the percentage increase of black students during the seventies was larger in nonpublic schools than in public schools. Even with this increase, however, the percentage of non-

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Table 3 about here

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public enrollment that is black is less than half the percentage of public enrollment that is black. Furthermore, in all income groups except the highest, blacks attend nonpublic schools at rates lower than whites, and as family income decreases, these race differences increase (Table 2). The importance of this result is magnified by the fact that 57% of black and only 26% of white students are in the two lowest income groups, with the lowest nonpublic attendance rates and the largest race differences (U.S. Census, 1979b: Table 14). These figures indicate that, although black participation in nonpublic education is increasing, race--as well as ability to pay--still affects the likelihood of a student attending nonpublic school.

Prospects in California

In 1981, a group of voucher supporters in California will formally announce a petition campaign to place a voucher proposal on the June, 1982 ballot. While it is not the purpose of this paper to analyze the social

and political climate in California, the following examples are included to illustrate that some of the nationwide changes discussed above have been particularly large there.

First, California has 30% of the nation's Hispanics; between 1970 and 1978, the percentage of Hispanics there increased from 11.9% to 16.5% (U.S. Census 1979c: Table B, Figure 2). Although 12.8% of the population over 18 were Hispanic, 23% of those under 18 were Hispanic in 1976 (U.S. Census, 1979c: Table 1). This indicates that 1) California schools have substantial numbers of students who qualify for recently-mandated special programs (see Neill, 1979); and 2) these students are not represented proportionately to their numbers in the electorate.

Second, increases in state level control of education have been considerable in California in recent years. The California Assembly has mandated evaluations for programs financed by state funds, an accountability system, bilingual programs, and competency-based graduation requirements. The Assembly must comply with the Serrano v. Priest Superior Court ruling (1976) which limits spending increases of high wealth districts, with a goal of equalizing per pupil spending (outside of special tax elections). It provides additional state aid to lower wealth districts. Over three quarters of local school budgets now come from state funds.

Third, while nonpublic enrollment (kindergarten-12) decreased 8.0% nationwide between 1970 and 1978, it increased 14.6% in California (California Department of Education, 1973; California Republican Caucus, 1979: A-6; U.S. Census, 1980b: Table 1). Public enrollment declines were only slightly smaller in California than in the U.S. While Catholic school enrollment nationwide dropped 2.4% between 1978 and 1979, it

increased .8% in California (NCEA, 1980: Table 13).

Fourth, Los Angeles is experiencing large shifts in the composition of its public school population. In 1979, Anglo students comprised 45% of the twelfth grade but only 24% of the kindergarten enrollment (Neill, 1979). In 1980, 13% of the district's white students did not return to public school (Newsnotes, 1980). The size of these changes indicates that factors other than the increasing percentage of Hispanics--e.g. court-ordered desegregation --are probably related to the increases in nonpublic enrollment in the state.

Thus, it appears that a variety of conditions may be making the current public school system unattractive to California voters and the political climate favorable for vouchers. (See also Kirst and Catterall, 1980; Fitzgerald, 1980.)

CONSENSUS AND DEBATE

The public debate over vouchers is often heated and emotional. Opponents claim that vouchers would put students at the mercy of educational charlatans; supporters condemn the public schools as uncaring monoliths, and extol the virtues of the American family. Beneath the rhetoric, however, is a major social question: Should the state be a monopolistic supplier of schooling?

Despite their differences, voucher supporters and opponents agree on many issues. They agree that the education system should provide citizenship and literacy skills for all, that it should be maximally efficient and equitable,[2] and that it should promote consensus while respecting diversity. They agree that the state should provide funds for education. What they disagree on is whether money should go to individuals operating in a state-regulated market or to public schools. The former conception is individualistic; the latter is democratic.

Voucher supporters trace their intellectual history to Thomas Paine and Adam Smith (eighteenth century), John Stuart Mill (1972) (nineteenth century) and Milton Friedman (1972) (twentieth century). They believe that 1) government should intervene in social life only to the extent that it is necessary, and 2) a free market with minimal government regulation would achieve social goals of education. State control of schools, therefore, is unnecessary (West, 1965; Sugarman and Kirp, 1975) and may even be unconstitutional (Arons, 1976). Comparing education to religion, Arons argues that state schooling violates the First Amendment "free-exercise" clause guaranteeing freedom of thought. Although supporters cite special cases in which individual choice has been successful (e.g. Coons and Sugarman, 1979; West, 1965), what is central to their argument is not this evidence, but their conviction that the social goals of education can be met without state control. They believe that families are more likely than the state to make educational decisions that benefit children, and that government support for a variety of schools fits the pluralistic society of the U.S. better than a unitary public system (Coons and Sugarman, 1979; Sowell, 1977; Glazer, 1977). Thus, they predict that a policy of individual choice and competition among schools would result in higher overall quality schooling.

Opponents of vouchers are not against choice. However, they would agree that because education is a public good (in the sense that everyone in society benefits from it), those choices should be supplied within a democratically-controlled school system (Tyack, et al., 1980). While LaNoue (1972: 145) suggests that a public system is preferable because "deciding educational policy forces society to confront ultimate questions about

its future," most supporters of public education oppose a market system because they doubt that it can be sufficiently efficient and equitable. They question whether any plan would create what vouchers need to function well: well-informed, aggressive "purchasers," who have equal bargaining power and a variety of schools, with diverse programs and well-measured quality (Bridge, 1977; Ginzburg, 1972). They predict that attempts to create these conditions through regulation (e.g. information, admissions standards, tuition restrictions, "compensatory" vouchers) would be costly and cumbersome. When finally implemented, they believe the system could easily be inequitable and socially divisive (Levin, 1980).

The seventies offered neither supporters nor opponents a chance to verify their claims.

THE SEVENTIES

During the late sixties, vouchers seemed to have no opponents. Supporters included conservative economist Milton Friedman, liberal school critic Mario Fantini, and socialist sociologist Christopher Jencks. "When all these people are reported to agree with a political scheme, one wonders whether we have reached the millenium," Arons (1972:72) observed. As it turned out, we had not reached the millenium. It soon became obvious that support for vouchers was related to different, and sometimes conflicting goals. Some regarded vouchers primarily as a mechanism to increase equity through re-allocation of resources; others hoped vouchers would result in increased efficiency and a more individualistic system; and still others believed vouchers would provide a way to introduce greater diversity of values and educational philosophies into schools.

In 1970, Jencks and his colleagues at the Center for the Study of Public Policy (CSPP) in Cambridge, Massachusetts released a model plan

(CSPP, 1970) that provided larger vouchers (more money) for students with special needs, required lotteries to select students for oversubscribed schools, and forbade racial discrimination and tuition charges above the voucher amount. Their work was funded by the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity. Needless to say, the proposal was not exactly what Milton Friedman had in mind; it identified the early attempts to implement vouchers with the policy goal of increasing equity.

The proposal was presented to numerous school districts (e.g. Seattle, Rochester, Gary, San Francisco) with promises of federal support. Only one district, Alum Rock, California--with 15,000 students, 55% Hispanic and 12% black--agreed to try a voucher system. Beginning in 1972-73, Alum Rock students were offered a choice among several public schools, each of which had several mini-school options. The superintendent's major goal, however, was to introduce decentralized management into the district, and the program never included some key elements of the CSPP proposal. Nonpublic schools never participated, the federal government agreed to compensate teachers if their jobs were lost, and the parent information plan was not fully operational until the third year. By then, resources were again being allocated at the school level, giving mini-schools less power to control their programs. During the fifth and final year, the mini-school organization--an important component of making choice available --was discarded, and Alum Rock decided not to assume the additional costs that the federal grant had been covering, such as compensatory vouchers, transportation and information (Bass, 1978).

After the Alum Rock project was started, the National Institute of Education (N.I.E.) assumed responsibility for federal voucher efforts.

East Hartford, Connecticut and the New Hampshire Department of Education conducted feasibility studies for voucher plans that would include nonpublic schools. But both plans died in 1976. The East Hartford school board rejected the plan after it lost the support of principals (Weber, 1977). In New Hampshire, where educators had hoped vouchers would be a cost-saver, voters turned down the proposal at least partly because they feared increased costs (Donaldson, 1977). With the demise of these two projects, N.I.E. ended its involvement with vouchers.

By this time, the sixties' spirit of social experimentation to increase equity was a mere memory, and vouchers had become identified instead with increasing individual options and halting the rapidly rising cost of public education. Michigan had a statewide referendum in 1978 that tied a voucher plan, with no details included, to ending property-tax financing of schools. It lost by a 3-1 margin.

In early 1980, John Coons and Stephen Sugarman--both lawyers and school finance reform activists who had been instrumental in obtaining the Serrano ruling--announced a petition campaign to put vouchers on the California ballot. Their proposal (included in Levin, 1980) resurrected the equity concerns of the CSPP proposal, and added elements designed to assure participation and diversity. It retained the public system, but gave students the option of receiving vouchers to attend "family choice" or "independent public" schools, which could charge tuition only according to the family's ability to pay and accept most students only by lottery. "Family choice" schools were required to be nonprofit and allowed to teach religion. "Independent public" schools were to be chartered by, and allowed to rent space from, public education institutions, and were prohibited from teaching religion.

The legislature was assigned the task of administering the plan, including setting voucher amounts according to student need, providing counseling grants for families with "special information needs," establishing student transfer and due-process procedures, and certifying schools. Although spending limits were written into the proposal, it was unclear how the nonpublic students or administration costs would be absorbed into the budget. (See California Coalition for Fair School Finance, 1979a, and 1979b.) The campaign was poorly organized and received little support (Kirst and Catterall, 1980). Coons and Sugarman are revising their proposal, and plan to begin another signature campaign in late 1981.[3]

Why did voucher efforts meet so little success? Education professionals are often credited--or blamed--with being the major obstacle blocking them. Teacher organizations almost invariably have opposed vouchers. In Alum Rock, teachers negotiated modifications to the original proposal that protected their jobs, required nonpublic schools to meet public school standards (including teacher certification), and absorbed what had been intended as an independent information and counseling agency into the school bureaucracy (Cohen and Farrar, 1977). Principals in Alum Rock favored decreasing the authority of the mini-schools (Bass, 1978).

In analyzing why neither vouchers nor any plan resembling a free market has been adopted, it is important to remember that education professionals are only one group among many with an interest in schools. What may have made them so effective at blocking vouchers during the seventies was that others were also unsupportive. The original CSPP authors expected support from a disgruntled public and supporters of nonpublic schools, especially Catholics. Most people agreed that in order for a voucher

plan to meet minimum equity criteria, the government would have to provide information about, and transportation to, a variety of alternative schools. Voters either were not convinced these costs would be balanced out by increased efficiency in school operations, or they were not dissatisfied enough to risk the additional expenses. Ironically, in East Hartford, people feared the voucher plan would increase federal involvement (Weber, 1977).

The nonpublic school community was wary of increased government regulation. This factor was probably significant in the California effort (Kirst and Catterall, 1980; Szanto, 1980). Also, Catholics suspected that because of the church/state issue, vouchers would be no easy salvation for their ailing system (McCann, 1972). (See also Van Geel, 1978 and California Republican Caucus, 1979: VII.)

Civil rights leaders, on the other hand, were wary of decreased regulation. Fearing that vouchers would provide support for "segregation academies," they preferred to concentrate their energies on reforming the public school system (McCann, 1972).

Doyle (1977), who headed the N.I.E. division supporting voucher feasibility studies, questioned even the federal commitment to the effort. For example, N.I.E. refused to agree to finance East Harford's defense if participation of parochial schools was challenged in court (Doyle, 1980c). Although government funding of nonpublic schools exists in several countries (e.g. Bezeau, 1979), the U.S. government has been relatively unsupportive of research on its effects (Doyle, 1980c) and foundations have not offered support either.

But obviously, vouchers must have had some supporters in the seventies. Who were they? Throughout the period, increased choice has received support

from social scientists and lawyers interested in education policy. They have included economists Milton Friedman and Reagan advisor Thomas Sowell, sociologists Nathan Glazer and James Coleman, and lawyers John Coons and Stephen Sugarman. Vouchers also received early support from liberal and radical school reformers. Recently, the Education Voucher Institute, whose directors include businesspeople, as well as lawyers and academics, was formed in Michigan.

Perhaps the general trends of the seventies, and not the strengths of specific proposals or campaigns, are responsible for vouchers' failure to attract political support. There is no doubt that for the government to supply tuition certificates instead of public schools would be a major change in a longstanding system, and furthermore, a change that would decentralize authority. As discussed earlier, equity-based education policy changes during the seventies involved increasing federal authority. Frustration with these policies, along with a renewed willingness of government to stimulate major social changes, may increase the attractiveness of reforms such as vouchers that increase individual authority.

THE EDUCATION MARKETPLACE

Voucher supporters believe a regulated voucher system will result in an efficient and equitable education market. Although there is no direct evidence that tells whether they are correct, past experience with vouchers and analyses of current social characteristics indicate that creating a market will not be simple.

The Alum Rock evaluation (Bridge and Blackman, 1978; Bass, 1978) provides the most direct evidence available about schooling under a voucher plan. In Alum Rock, a large majority of parents rated nearness to home--

not curriculum or instructional methods--as the most important criterion for school choice, although increasing numbers (15% by the third year) sent their children to out-of-neighborhood schools. Socially advantaged parents were more aware of the program, and were more likely to prefer official school publications over counselors as sources of information. Parents with more education were more likely to choose "innovative" programs; those with less education were more likely to choose "traditional" programs. Ethnic imbalance in voucher schools increased only slightly. Classroom observation indicated that there was little diversity in the educational programs of the mini-schools; the variation that did exist was not associated with mini-school differences, and some announced curricular offerings were not even available. As mentioned above, professionals successfully prevented those outside the bureaucracy from participating in the education system. When the voucher experiment ended, the education market in Alum Rock was little different than it had been five years earlier.

Since a true voucher system with nonpublic options and a workable information system has never been tried in the U.S., there is no direct evidence about what the education marketplace would be like. As Fenstermacher states:

> The paradox of universal, compulsory, state controlled schooling is that so long as we insist upon it, we cannot learn whether we need it, what we need it for, how it does whatever we suppose it does, or what might, if anything, better take its place (1979:36).

It is clear, however, that for an education marketplace to exist, individuals must participate by choosing schools, and a variety of schools

must compete for students. Participation, however, would be constrained by the social roles of parents and students; school availability would be constrained by resources associated with economic and political power; and social class would probably have an effect on both of these aspects of the marketplace.

Participation

Voucher supporters predict that if parents were given the authority to choose their children's schools, they would assume new roles as active participants in the process of education (Wagner, 1977). Evidence suggests, however, that it may require more than a change in education policy to convince parents that they ought to become informed about a variety of schools and select those that they prefer. The Alum Rock experiment, according to Cohen (1978), demonstrates that voucher plans will not change parent behavior because vouchers are a political solution to a problem that is not fundamentally political. As long as specialization is central to the entire social role structure, and there is "almost universal acceptance of professional authority by the consumers of... schooling," it is unlikely that most parents will be affected by the introduction of the market system, Cohen (1978:440) argues. Rather than use their new authority, most parents will continue to regard professionals as the appropriate people to make decisions about their children's schooling.

An additional factor militating against active parent participation is the inevitable tension created because parents see teachers as antagonists as well as experts (Lightfoot, 1979). Because of what Lightfoot terms "the determining power and momentum of social and cultural imagery" (1979: 176), it may be unrealistic to expect parents to adapt easily to participating cooperatively with educators to select schools for their children.

A variety of sources corroborate the Alum Rock findings that program choice and level of participation in voucher plans are related to a family's

social class. The Alum Rock finding that parents' choices of "innovative" or "traditional" programs are related to their level of education is consistent with Kohn's work (1977) demonstrating that middle-class parents value self-direction and working-class parents value conformance to external rules. Richardson (1977) found that when adults were offered W.I.N. skill training vouchers, those with low levels of education were least likely to use the vouchers. Hill and Stafford (1980) and Hill and Juster (1980) found that college-educated mothers, and mothers in families with high wages, devote more hours to child-rearing than other mothers. If time necessary to select schools is to come from time allotted to child-rearing, these mothers can be expected to participate more actively in voucher plans.

The California proposal recognizes concerns about participation for families from all social classes, and makes counseling available to those who are non-literate or have "special information needs."

Diversity and Competition

Supporters envision that, if vouchers were implemented, new nonpublic schools would be started. They also believe that if the current public schools were retained, their quality would improve because of increased competition with nonpublic schools (Coons and Sugarman, 1979). Under current social conditions, however, the variety of alternatives is likely to be restricted by judicial rulings, the need for resources to form new schools, and legislative regulations.

Although some court rulings have resulted in increased options for individuals, the First Amendment ("establishment" clause) has been invoked in the past, to preclude almost all forms of financial support for church-affiliated elementary and secondary schools (Van Geel,

1978). In addition, the Fourteenth Amendment ("equal protection" clause) has been interpreted as a guarantee of equal opportunity for education for members of all relevant groups or of common opportunity for all individuals within the public schools (Van Geel, 1978). With vouchers, equity is measured by the opportunity of individuals to choose different school experiences. This criterion would probably be seen as inconsistent with past rulings. Individual opportunity for social mobility is also an accepted facet of equal opportunity. In light of the suggestion that the association between parent choices and values related to social class may impede social mobility of students (Bridge and Blackman, 1978), vouchers may be regarded as socially unacceptable.

In addition, it takes considerable resources to start and maintain a school. The California proposal allows the legislature to provide loans for acquisition and maintenance of "educational facilities" and allows "independent public schools" to rent space from chartering institutions. It will be very difficult, however, for any policy to adjust entirely for the unequal resources of school constituencies. A group of individuals with little money or skills that needs financial or legal advice or discount prices on school supplies, is unlikely to include or to attract an accountant, a lawyer, or a store owner ready to offer their services. Thus, what for some is a simple matter of asking for volunteers in the audience to assist in the operation of a school, entails for others the time-consuming effort of asking strangers for donations.

Finally, the actual implementation of education vouchers will inevitably involve additional regulatory activities--some required and others at the discretion of the government--such as certifying schools and staff, overseeing the process of student selection by schools, and designating voucher amounts for students with special needs. John Stuart Mill, who called "State

education...a mere contrivance for molding people to be exactly like one another," supported annual examinations until children had mastered a "minimum of general knowledge" (Mill, 1972:4). There is tremendous potential for conflict over regulations in all these areas, and those with political power are likely to exert a disproportionate influence on the outcome. The California proposal forbids the legislature from adding to existing private school regulations. The plan does, however, grant to the legislature numerous broad duties and authorities. For example, it must allocate resources so as to "encourage diversity" and provide "adequate information," and it may require standardized testing and minimum competency graduation requirements. (See California Coalition for Fair School Finance, 1979a, 1979b.) The result of such activities could be considerable restriction on the prerogatives of schools, and thus, fewer alternatives and reduced competition.

CONCLUSION

Well before most of the events discussed in this paper took place, LaNoue (1972:143) predicted that if vouchers were ever to succeed, they would need the support of the coalition that was described in 1969 by Kevin Phillips in The Emerging Republican Majority. In 1981, there is little doubt that this coalition has emerged and won political power. While supporters of public schools call for the U.S. to "renew its ideological contract to...use the common school to realize democracy" (Tyack, et. al., 1980:254), the coalition in power is calling for a different contract, one that reduces government control over their lives. Their interest in supporting the public schools may wane as fewer of them have children in school, as their children constitute a declining percentage of public school enrollment, and as the schools

struggle to meet the increased demands that have been placed on them during recent years. Vouchers could have considerable political appeal, because they promise to make alternatives to the public schools more affordable.

No one really knows how the education system would change if vouchers were enacted. Participation levels may be higher than in past voucher programs, if information services are adequate and parents rely less on professional authority in general. Some restrictions on school diversity may be lifted, if the Supreme Court reverses its interpretation of separation of church and state and equal protection (Van Geel, 1978; Doyle, 1980c). New nonpublic schools would be started, and they would attract many students.

On the other hand, the goals of the largely white, middle- and lower-middle-class coalition backing vouchers could probably be achieved without costly programs to stimulate participation and diversity. Faced with many competing demands for money to support public programs, members of this coalition would probably support minimal funding for equity-promoting services that evidence suggests are needed (at least initially) to ensure equal opportunity for choice under vouchers.

It is important to note that vouchers do not eliminate government control of education; they redefine it. Whereas its current function is to supply schools, the government's task under vouchers is to establish and finance a market that is efficient and equitable. But it still controls the purse strings. Government control under vouchers might allow increased diversity in the education system, but politically powerful groups would still be able to greatly influence the market through setting regulations and administering support services.[4] Also, since funding is the ultimate mechanism of control, statewide voucher plans actually centralize govern-

ment's role rather than reduce it (even if local public schools are retained). In that sense, they represent not a new form of governance, but an additional step in the centralization process that began before the turn of the century. (See Meyer, 1979a; Katz, 1971).

The expressed goal of vouchers is to increase the control of families over education. But if vouchers are enacted during the next few years, that goal will probably be accomplished only for those with political power to control how education funds are spent. For many other families--regardless of whether they want alternatives--few options will exist; the only change will be that political control has been removed even further from their communities.

FOOTNOTES

1. The U.S. Census provides three sets of projections based on completed cohort fertility rates for current child-bearing age women of 2.7 (Series I), 2.1 (Series II), and 1.7 (Series III). The Census believes Series II, and Kirst and Garms (1980) believe Series III, is most likely to be correct.
2. Sugarman and Kirp (1975:156) use Pareto's definition of efficiency, a characteristic of "ideal market behavior," in which not only are resources distributed without regard to their initial distribution, but all exchanges occur which could make someone better off without making someone else worse off. Equity, on the other hand, is a goal of distributions which make some people worse off at the expense of others, in the interests of society. They point out that collective action can be taken to achieve either of these bases of resource distribution. Efficiency is also used by others to denote the more general idea of cost-effectiveness.
3. The 1980 proposal competed against one calling for tuition tax-credits. That also failed, but its supporters plan to collect enough signatures to place a plan allowing a $1200 tuition tax-credit on the Washington, D.C. ballot in November, 1981. Most of the original voucher supporters who wanted equity-based regulations to be minimal or nonexistent are now focussing their efforts on tax-credits, which operate outside the education bureaucracy.
4. The California voucher proposal makes a more direct attempt than any previous voucher plan to assure participation, alternatives, and minimal regulation of schools. Once enacted, however, the legislature would have considerable control over its specific implementation.

Table 1: Public and Nonpublic Enrollments Since 1900

school year ending June	enrollment, grades 1-8			enrollment, grades 9-12			
	% in nonpub	% change/year since previous date		% of 14-17-yr-olds in school	% in nonpub	% change/year since previous date	
		nonpub	pub			nonpub	pub
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1900	7.2			11.4	17.6		
1910	8.3	3.1	1.1	15.4	11.3	.5	7.6
1920	7.2	(.3)	1.4	32.3	8.9	8.3	14 0
1930	10.1	5.5	.8	51.4	7.2	5.9	10.6
1940	10.3	(.7)	(1.1)	73.3	6.5	3.4	5.0
1950	12.3	2.3	.1	76.8	10.5	4.7	(1.3)
1960	14.3	6.6	4.0	86.1	10.9	5.4	4.8
1971	11.6	(.7)	1.5	94.3	8.0	1.2	5.4
1975	10.0	(4.9)	(1.7)		7.6	.04	1.3
1980	11.2	(.4)	(2.3)	93.5	7.4	(.9)	(.5)
change, 1971-80		(2.1)	(1.7)			(.4)	(.3)

Figures in parentheses represent decreases; others represent increases.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics 1977-78.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 355 "School Enrollment--Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1979, (Advance Report). August 1980.

Table 2: Race, Income and Nonpublic School Attendance Rate (Percentage in Nonpublic Schools)

	Black				White			
	grades 1-8		grades 9-12		grades 1-8		grades 9-12	
	1970	1978	1970	1978	1970	1978	1970	1978
Income group:								
lowest 1	1.9	2.0	0	.9	5.0	5.2	1.1	3.5
2	1.1	2.9	1.7	.8	6.3	7.6	4.1	4.6
3	6.0	5.7	.6	2.7	9.6	6.8	5.9	6.3
4	5.0	5.5	.9	2.4	13.1	15.1	9.2	7.9
5	6.6	11.7	5.9	4.3	10.9	16.8	8.0	8.8
highest 6	16.1	24.0	4.9	16.2	14.7	18.5	25.8	14.1
average	4.2	4.6	1.9	2.5	12.9	12.6	9.0	8.5

Income categories are those used by the Bureau of the Census. In constant 1978 dollars, the upper limits of each category are:

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1970	$ 5,040	8,400	12,600	16,800	25,200	above 25,200
1978	5,000	9,999	14,999	19,999	24,999	above 25.000

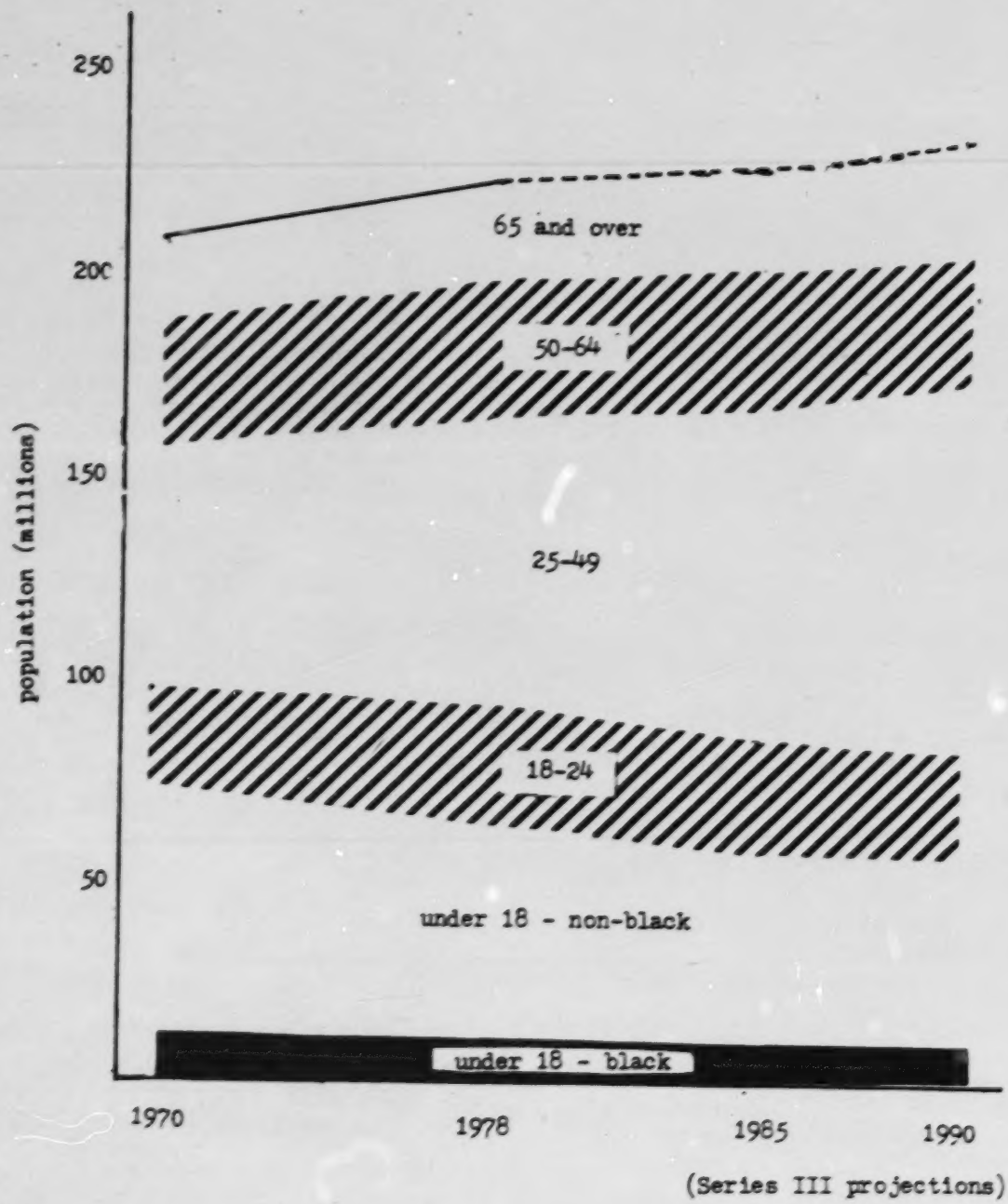
Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census
1971 Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 222, "School Enrollment: October 1970."
1979 Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 346, "School Enrollment--Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1978."

Table 3: Percent Black in Public and Nonpublic Schools, 1970 and 1979

	1970	1979
Public	14.8	16.1
Nonpublic	4.7	7.5

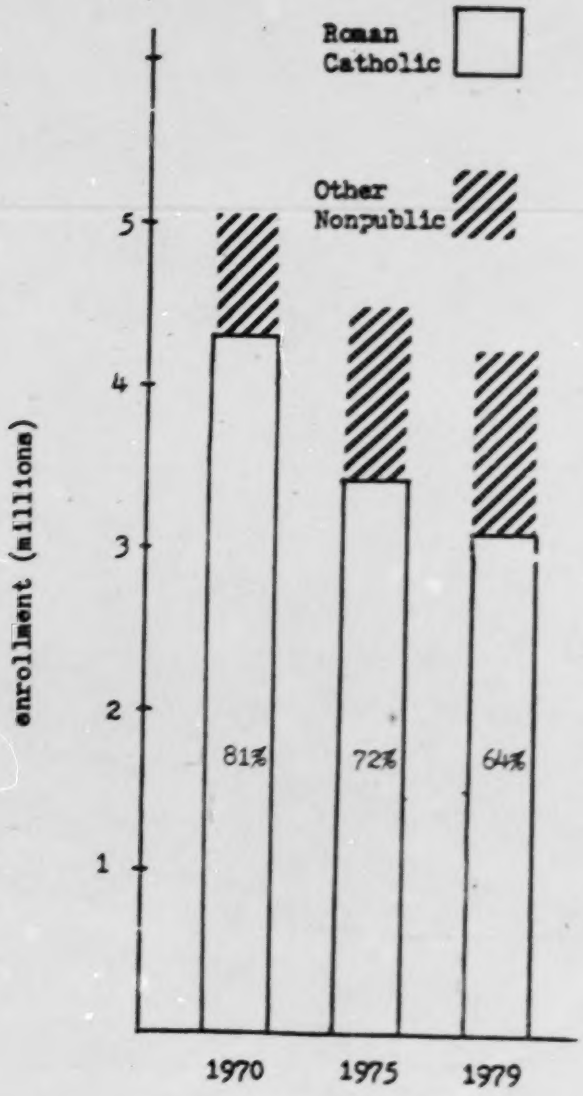
Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census. Current Population Reports, Series P-20, No. 355. School Enrollment--Social and Economic Characteristics of Students: October 1979, (Advance Report). August 1980.

Figure 1: Age Structure, 1970-1990



Source: U.S. Census Current Population Reports, Series P-25, No. 800, "Estimates of the Population...1976 to 1978," and No. 704, "Projections of the Population: 1977 to 2050."

Figure 2: Nonpublic Enrollment By Type, Grades 1-12



Source: National Catholic Education Association, "A Statistical Report on U.S. Catholic Schools, 1979-80."
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